

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 08353 081139Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-10 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MC-02

IGA-01 PRS-01 SAM-01 /066 W

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P R 081056Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3945

INFO DOD

CINCPAC

S E C R E T BANGKOK 8353

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, CB, TH, VS

SUBJECT: DISPOSITION OF FORMER GVN AND GKR US-SUPPLIED MILITARY  
EQUIPMENT

REF: (A) STATE 106075; (B) STATE 106077

1. I SAW FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHOONHAVAN THIS MORNING  
(MAY 8) AT MY REQUEST TO DISCUSS FURTHER THE DISPOSITION OF  
FORMER GVN AND GKR US-SUPPLIED MILITARY EQUIPMENT. I PASSED  
TO HIM COPIES OF OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS WITH SVN  
AND CAMBODIA AND MADE THE POINTS SUGGESTED IN PARA 4 REF (A).

2. I THEN SAID THAT, IN ADDITION TO OUR CLEAR LEGAL CLAIM  
TO THIS EQUIPMENT, THE RTG SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WE REGARD  
THIS AS AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUE. TO TRANSFER ANY OF  
THIS EQUIPMENT TO THE COMMUNIST REGIMES IN VIETNAM OR  
CAMBODIA WOULD CREATE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN OUR TWO  
COUNTRIES. SUCH ACTION WOULD ALSO RAISE BASIC QUESTIONS  
IN THE U.S. CONGRESS AND AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WHICH  
WOULD COMPLICATE OUR ABILITY TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO  
THAILAND. I NOTED THAT EVEN NOW WE WERE UNABLE TO  
PROCEED WITH OUR DECISION TO TURN OVER SIGNIFICANT ITEMS  
OF THIS MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO THE RTG BECAUSE OF THE RTG'S

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 08353 081139Z

SUSPENDING ACTION ON DISPOSITION. OBVIOUSLY WE WOULD NOT

TURN THESE ITEMS OVER TO THE RTG IF THERE WAS THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBILITY THEY MIGHT BE PASSED ON TO THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS.

3. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE RTG WOULD, ON THE BASIS OF THE AGREEMENTS I HAD JUST GIVEN HIM, CONFIRM OUR RESIDUAL TITLE TO THIS EQUIPMENT AND ENABLE US TO PROCEED PROMPTLY WITH ITS DISPOSITION. I ADDED THAT IT WOULD NOT SERVE EITHER OF OUR INTERESTS FOR THIS PROBLEM TO CONTINUE AND PERHAPS GROW.

4. CHATCHAI PROBED ON WHETHER THERE WERE NOT CERTAIN ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT WHICH WERE NO LONGER VALUABLE (HE MENTIONED "OLD C-47'S" AS AN EXAMPLE) WHICH THE THAI MIGHT TURN OVER TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON. I POINTED OUT THAT THE AGREEMENTS REGARDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE COVERED ALL ITEMS IRRESPECTIVE OF TYPE OR CONDITION. CHATCHAI THEN ASKED ABOUT A COMMERCIAL AIR VIETNAM PLANE WHICH ARRIVED IN THAILAND INDEPENDENTLY. HE ALSO ASKED ABOUT ITEMS PROVIDED UNDER OUR ECONOMIC AID AGREEMENT WITH THE GVN, CITING FISHING BOATS AS AN EXAMPLE. I SAID WE HAD NO DIRECT INTEREST IN DISPOSITION OF THE AIR VIETNAM PLANE AND THAT, WHILE OUR ECONOMIC AID AGREEMENTS NORMALLY DO NOT PROVIDE FOR AUTOMATIC REVERSION OF TITLE TO THE UNITED STATES, I WAS UNAWARE IN ANY EVENT THAT ANY SUCH ITEMS HAD COME INTO THAILAND.

5. CHATCHAI SAID HE FACED A DIFFICULT PROBLEM SINCE A DELEGATION IS COMING TO THAILAND SOON FROM HANOI (THIS IS THE FIRST WE HAVE HEARD OF THIS). HE HOPES THE GROUP WILL BE WILLING TO DISCUSS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND THEY WILL PROBABLY ALSO WISH TO DISCUSS THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. I TOLD CHATCHAI I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION FROM OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION THAT THE RTG HAD TOLD HANOI IT WOULD DEAL ONLY WITH A SOUTH VIETNAM GOVERNMENT ON THIS EQUIPMENT. CHATCHAI BRUSHED THIS ASIDE WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WOULD SEND A DELEGATION TO PROTECT SOUTH VIETNAMESE DIPLOMATIC PROPERTY IN THAILAND BUT THAT THE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS AS THINGS NOW STAND WOULD BE WITH A NORTH VIETNAMESE GROUP. I TOLD HIM I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE TO DISCUSS THE DISPOSITION OF THIS MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN ANY WAY WITH A GROUP FROM HANOI, REITERATED OUR POSITION REGARDING TITLE TO IT AND URGED THAT THE RTG RESOLVE THE ISSUE QUICKLY ON THE BASIS OF THE AGREEMENTS I HAD GIVEN HIM TO AVOID THIS BECOMING A MAJOR ISSUE BETWEEN THAILAND AND NORTH VIETNAM. THE MOST CHATCHAI WOULD GIVE WAS TO SAY HE WOULD STUDY THE SITUATION.

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 08353 081139Z

TION OF THIS MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN ANY WAY WITH A GROUP FROM HANOI, REITERATED OUR POSITION REGARDING TITLE TO IT AND URGED THAT THE RTG RESOLVE THE ISSUE QUICKLY ON THE BASIS OF THE AGREEMENTS I HAD GIVEN HIM TO AVOID THIS BECOMING A MAJOR ISSUE BETWEEN THAILAND AND NORTH VIETNAM. THE MOST CHATCHAI WOULD GIVE WAS TO SAY HE WOULD STUDY THE SITUATION.

6. BEFORE LEAVING I TOLD CHATCHAI THAT I WAS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED BY THE PRESS AND PUBLIC HANDLING OF THIS ISSUE OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THE IMPRESSION HAD BEEN CREATED IN THE THAI PRESS THAT WE HAD MOVED THESE ITEMS IN AND OUT WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE RTG. I SAID, AS HE WAS AWARE, WE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER FULLY AND HAD THE AGREEMENT OF THE APPROPRIATE THAI AUTHORITIES BEFORE ANY STEPS WERE TAKEN. I HOPED THAT STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

7. CHATCHAI REFERRED TO A RECENT PRESS ITEM (BASED ON A BACKGROUND COMMENT BY US) THAT WE DID HAVE THE AGREEMENT OF THE THAI AUTHORITIES ON THE MOVEMENT OF THIS EQUIPMENT. I NOTED THAT THIS ITEM HAD RECEIVED ONLY LIMITED COVERAGE AND BELIEVED ADDITIONAL STEPS WERE REQUIRED. I SAID ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A U.S. EMBASSY STATEMENT BUT WE COULD DO THIS ONLY IF THE RTG DID NOT, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, UNDERCUT IT. CHATCHAI FELT SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD ONLY ADD FUEL TO THE FIRE. SINCE WE CAN BE SURE, IF HE FEELS THIS WAY, THAT CHATCHAI WOULD SEE THAT IT DID INDEED FUEL THE FIRE, I AGREED WE WOULD NOT ISSUE OUR OWN STATEMENT BUT URGED HIM TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT HIMSELF. CHATCHAI SAID HE WOULD DO SO REGARDING THE FACT THAT WE DID HAVE APPROVAL FROM THE APPROPRIATE MILITARY AUTHORITIES FOR ALL ACTIONS TAKEN AND ALSO REGARDING THE FACT THE MIDWAY HAD SAILED LONG BEFORE THE RTG SUSPENDED SHIPMENT OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. WE WILL SEE. MEANWHILE THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE JUDICIOUS BACKGROUNDING.

8. OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST, OUR DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PRESS PROBLEM LED CHATCHAI INTO A GENERAL ATTACK ON THE SUPREME COMMAND AND THE THAI MILITARY IN GENERAL. HE EXPLAINED IN SOME DETAIL AND WITH MUCH EMOTION THAT "THE GENERALS" DO  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BANGKO 08353 081139Z

NOT UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT SITUATION AND DO NOT GET CABINET APPROVAL FOR ACTIONS THEY TAKE. I POINTED OUT THAT WE, OF COURSE, HAD TO LEAVE THIS INTERNAL COORDINATION TO THE THAI THEMSELVES, AND CHATCHAI RELUCTANTLY AGREED. CHATCHAI THEN ADDED WITH SOME FORCE THAT THE MILITARY HAVE EVEN GOTTEN TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, WHO NOW ACTS "MORE LIKE A MILITARY MAN THAN A POLITICIAN."

9. COMMENT: CHATCHAI NOW HAS THE WORD FROM US CLEARLY REGARDING DISPOSITION OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THIS MAY SLOW HIM DOWN, BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT HIM TO BE HELPFUL. WE ARE ALSO TAKING STEPS TO GENERATE SUPPORT ELSEWHERE WITHIN THE RTG BEFORE THIS ISSUE IS DISCUSSED AT THE THAI NSC.  
MASTERS

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 MAY 1975  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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**To:** STATE  
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